



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

ASMFC & MAFMC Modify Scup Specifications for 2018 and 2019

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) and the Mid Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) reviewed previously approved specifications for summer flounder, black sea bass and bluefish fisheries and modified 2018 and 2019 specifications for scup. The Commission’s actions are final and apply to state waters. The Council will forward its federal waters recommendations regarding scup specifications to NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Administrator for final approval.

The table below summarizes commercial quotas and recreational harvest limits (RHL) for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish (2017 values are provided for comparison purposes). Please note the 2019 scup specifications may be adjusted based on changes in the fishery or new scientific information.

Summer Flounder

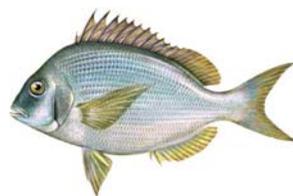
For summer flounder, the Commission and Council received a data update, including catch, landings, and survey indices through 2016. The Council and Board maintained the previously approved 2018 specifications based on stock projections from the 2016 assessment update. A benchmark stock assessment is scheduled for peer review in late 2018. A working group is being formed to develop alternative modeling approaches to be considered in the assessment.



Species	Year	Commercial Quota (millions of pounds)	Commercial Minimum Fish Size (TL)	Commercial Diamond Mesh Size	Recreational Harvest Limit (millions of pounds)
Summer Flounder	2017	5.66	14"	5.5"	3.77
	2018	6.63	14"	5.5"	4.42
Scup	2017	18.38	9"	5"	5.50
	2018	23.98	9"	5"	7.37
	2019	23.98	9"	5"	7.37
Black Sea Bass	2017	4.12	11"	4.5"	4.29
	2018	3.52	11"	4.5"	3.66
Bluefish	2017	8.54	Varies by state		9.65
	2018	7.24	Varies by state		11.58

Scup

The scup stock assessment update, which includes data through 2016, indicates the stock was not overfished and overfishing was not occurring in 2016. Spawning stock biomass was estimated to be 206% of the biomass target. Given the desire to maintain stable measures and take into account management uncertainty raised by the Monitoring Committee, the Commission and Council approved a commercial quota of 23.98 million pounds (a 30% increase from the 2017 quota), and a RHL of 7.37 million pounds (a 34% increase from the 2017 RHL) for the 2018 and 2019 fishing seasons. The difference between the increases in the commercial quota and RHL is due to projected discard estimates for the commercial and recreational fisheries.



The Commission and Council were also presented a range of commercial alternatives for possible consideration in the Draft Summer Flounder Amendment. Based on feedback from both bodies, work will continue on the development of management alternatives for permits and latent effort, as well as commercial allocation. The Board and Council will decide which management alternatives to include in the document at a later meeting.

Black Sea Bass

The Commission and Council received a data update for black sea bass, including catch, landings, and survey indices through 2016. The update indicates black sea bass biomass continues to be high, and the 2015 year class appears to be above average. **(to page 30)**

